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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

July 17, 1961

MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT

The decision on Berlin

I. One alternative recommends that you, in the near future inter alia

- declare a national emergency
- call up the reserves and the national guard
- extend terms of service of those on active duty
- return dependents from Europe
- request an additional \$4.3 billion for defense, for a total deficit of from \$8 to \$10 billion
- postpone any discussion of negotiations or constructive proposals.

Such a course of action, in my opinion, would

- endanger our foreign aid, education, space and other appropriations, while creating a deficit spending issue for 1964 when the cause of the deficit may have been forgotten
- leave the propaganda and diplomatic initiative to Khrushchev, enabling him to choose and monopolize the forum and topic for discussions and cause the United States to be disadvantageously forced into negotiations by our Allies, neutral opinion or the U.N. instead of at our own initiative
- engage Khrushchev's prestige to a point where he felt he could not back down from a showdown, and provoke further or faster action on his part in stepping up the arms race or signing a treaty with East Germany
- arouse those at home and abroad who are fearful of "rash" and "trigger happy" actions by the United States, with possibly so much divisiveness that Khrushchev could be encouraged.

It would also run counter to the following recommendations, which I believe are among the best you have received:

Acheson: "We should try to avoid actions which are not needed for sound military purposes and which would be considered provocative ... The more drastic of our preparations will be more impressive to Moscow, and perhaps, have a less disturbing effect on our allies, if taken later on as the crisis deepens, when they will be more suited to the immediacy of the threat."

National Intelligence Estimate: "... military preparatory measures undertaken with fanfare at an early stage of the developing crisis over Berlin would have the effect of making the Soviet negotiating position more rigid ... At the least, they would feel compelled to respond with a strong public posture and military measures of their own to prove that they could not be intimidated."

Tripartite Contingency Plan: "... quiet preparatory and precautionary military measures of a kind which will not create public alarm but which will be detectable by Soviet intelligence."

Kissinger: "... firmness should be related to the substance of our negotiating position ... not proved by seeming to shy away from a diplomatic confrontation."

Bohlen: "... The actual value of the increased military force (6-7 divisions instead of 2) would seem to be a secondary point. Therefore, there would not seem to be any great urgency as to turning beyond measures which could be taken now without formal Congressional action or Presidential Proclamation."

McNamara in May, 1961: "It is my belief that the overall force strength (of U.S. Armed Forces) is appropriate at this time and should not be significantly expanded ... certain additional actions can be financed within the limits of the budget previously recommended."

II. The other course would be articulated by an early Presidential TV address which would

- explain the nature of the Berlin issue, our rights, obligations and objectives from which we will not back down an inch
- emphasize the nature of the crisis as one requiring endurance rather than emergency actions, and confidence in leadership rather than detailed disclosure of plans
- express confidence in the military readiness moves previously undertaken (not in response to Khrushchev's note) including our capacity to order an air alert at any time, improvements in our ground alert, the ability of our Polaris now on station, the increased readiness of our reserves and the addition of a new Marine Division
- make clear that we will take whatever other military measures are necessary to insure our ability, in a Berlin showdown, to make clear our intent to defend Berlin at all costs, and to give the Russians an opportunity to negotiate before the nuclear stage is reached
- urge increased attention to ~~Division~~ Civil Defense
- announce plans for allied machinery on economic sanctions
- announce plans for strengthening the readiness of West Berlin, its stockpiles and airlift preparations, etc.
- describe the concept of "contingency plans" and allied efforts to improve them
- call for Congressional Resolution underlining our commitments to aid and protect the people of Berlin and their right of self-determination.
- make whatever constructive proposals we are ready to initiate now.

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III. Before you can choose and execute either alternative, you must make certain that (despite the abundance of memos) the following questions have been answered:

1. Is a declaration of national emergency necessary now?  
-- Obtain an opinion from the Attorney General as to what powers may be exercised under the present "Korean emergency".
2. Is a call-up of reserves and national guard necessary now?  
-- Obtain a report from Defense as to precise what conventional forces would be used in Berlin if our access were blocked; what allied forces would be available in that area in late 1961, and how the remainder could be available <sup>for</sup> increased draft calls and recruiting, reassessments to combat duty, and otherwise.
3. Is a \$4 to 5 billion additional Defense request necessary now?  
-- Obtain a report from Defense as to how the answer to (2) could be initiated now with an additional \$1.5 additional or less, through reprogramming and borrowing and the opportunity to get a supplemental in January if the situation has worsened.  
-- Obtain a report from Budget as to how much ~~of~~ <sup>the</sup> \$4.2 billion request was essential now for Berlin
4. Is a wholly negative diplomatic posture necessary now?  
-- Obtain a report from USIA on what and whether positive moves could help win world opinion to the support of our position in Berlin  
-- Obtain a report from State evaluating (on their merits, as well as on the basis of DeGaulle's, Adenauer's, or Khrushchev's likely reaction) all constructive proposals which might now or later be included as a part of our position, including: a new version of the Western peace plan, our initiating a German peace conference, the role of the UN, the use of the World Court, a Western Summit, a plebiscite in Western or all of Berlin or Germany, Thompson's suggestion for stretching out the period of achieving an all-German constitution, solution "C" and Acheson's additons, any all - Berlin Free City, comprehensive schemes for European security, a nuclear free zone, use of the forthcoming conference of neutrals, exploratory private talks with the USSR, and alternatives to our position on reunification and the recognition of East Germany.

-- Obtain from State a report on other counter-offensive features in a diplomatic-propaganda program that would make it hard for Khrushchev to sign a treaty this ~~fall~~, including complaints of Russian violation of previous agreements regarding Berlin and East Germany.

Theodore C. Sorensen